

Rudyard Kipling's

(*MEDICINE)

Hat Trick



COMPLIMENTS OF
The Medicine Hat NEWS
MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA

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City Council had decided should be held on the name proposal.

Then someone in the Club remarked: "I wish that Rudyard
Kipling knew of this; he would flay the hide off these blighters."

And so it was done.

Mr. Francis F. Fatt, Postmaster at the time, was selected to
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was the author's reply, that the plebiscite was never held and
Medicine Hat is still Medicine Hat today.

The Medicine Hat NEWS is pleased to present here the
correspondence on this matter between Mr. Fatt and Mr. Kipling.

The first of the three letters is from Mr. Fatt to Mr. J. M.
Gilmour, one - time chief clerk of the Canadian Pacific Railway
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HOW IT HAPPENED . . .

*No one would have had to explain the term "Hat Trick" to the late Mr. Rudyard Kipling, for he was an Englishman—as well as a world-famous author—and knew all about cricket. For those of us who aren't devotees of the game, however, a hat trick occurs in the game of cricket when a bowler takes three wickets (puts out three batsmen) by three successive balls. This feat entitled him to a new hat from his fellow club members.

We at The NEWS feel Mr. Kipling truly scored a Hat Trick here in Medicine Hat when he dissuaded the townsfolk of the city in 1910 from the folly of changing their city's name. (History doesn't record whether those opposing the move presented Mr. Kipling with a new hat, but there can be no doubt now that they should have.)

How did Mr. Kipling's Medicine Hat Trick come to pass? Well, Mr. Kipling had visited the city in 1907 and was as much taken with the town and its inhabitants as they were with him. So much so, in fact, that, when three years later the city was booming and a host of the newcomers wished to change the city's name, opponents of the move turned for help to Medicine Hat's old friend and mentor—Rudyard Kipling.

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Fred McGuinness

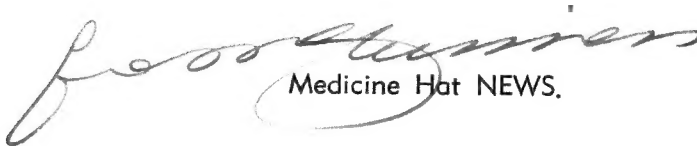
Box 10,

Medicine Hat, Alberta.

Dear Friend:

You might find this booklet of interest.
It tells a little known story of western
Canadiana.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Fred McGuinness". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name "Fred McGuinness".

Fred McGuinness

Medicine Hat NEWS.

622 Sayward Building,
Victoria, B.C.,
May 4, 1936.

Mr. J. M. Gilmour,
C. P. Ry. Co.,
Medicine Hat, Alberta.

Dear Mr. Gilmour:

Your letter of the 1st instant received this morning and your words carried me back to old times in Medicine Hat and the many happy days I spent there. I cannot judge from your letter whether the interest of your friend exists in R. K.'s works, or in the early history of Medicine Hat.

At any rate, not being busy this morning and for the sake of posterity, I think that I had better give you my recollection of the origin of the Kipling letter and the result of same.

Medicine Hat in 1910 was beginning to feel growing pains; outside land was being subdivided, strange men were opening real estate offices and property owners had absurd offers made to them for their holdings. We old-timers could not understand what was happening and we certainly looked upon these newcomers as "boomers" and really undesirable citizens.

The Cypress Club was our regular resort and one afternoon we were gathered there in November, 1910, cussing and discussing current events — Bill Cousins, Walter Huckvale, Tony Day and several others. The main topic was a new plan of the newcomers to change the name of the city from Medicine Hat to something more attractive to them.

Well, we chewed the rag for a long time, until someone said: "I wish that Rudyard Kipling knew about this; he would flay the hide off these blighters." A short time before this we had received R.K. in our town and had a glorious time with him. You know how R.K. hated frills and public addresses and so forth; so we just met him as man to man, in all our rustic habits, talked to him as if he was a beef buyer and really had a whale of a time. Of course, R.K. just ate it up, and he really enjoyed himself and hated to tear himself away.

Well, the result of this remark was that the idea took root and after another round of drinks someone said: "Who will write to Kipling about this?" Another said: "I think Frank Fatt had

better write to him; he slings a pretty good pen and he can tell Kipling all about it."

So it was agreed, and I went back home and wrote my letter and our dear old friend came back with an immediate reply. The idea seem to hit him in the right spot and he got quite warm over the question. Well, I took the letter just as soon as it arrived to the Cypress Club and read it aloud to our old cronies, who thought it was simply perfect. Immediately it was published in The Medicine Hat NEWS and from there copied into hundreds of papers all round the world. Friends of mine scattered all over creation read it and, of course, sent me copies of their local papers, so that it really almost became a bore!

The matter died down then for some years until in December 1922 I received a letter from Mr. George Parker Winship, Assistant Librarian, Harvard College, asking my permission to print my letter and R.K.'s reply. Of course this was willingly given and Winship printed the matter in pamphlet form, sending me one copy. I am enclosing a copy of this correspondence for it is very amusing I think; also you will find a copy of my first letter to R.K. as Winship has it. The original I have lost.

While on this part of the subject, in 1934 I sent Mr. Winship a copy of an unpublished poem (see Page 8) of R.K.'s written by him in 1907 when he was in Victoria. I have added this to my file in case it would interest your friend.

I do not think that there is anything else I can say only that it gives me great pleasure to rake over these old leaves of old times, and I hope that you will not be disappointed in the result of your inquiry.

With kindest regards,
I remain, dear Mr. Gilmour,
Yours very faithfully,

—Frank F. Fatt.

Medicine Hat, Alta.
November 22, 1910.

Rudyard Kipling, Esq.
Bateman's Burwash,
Sussex, England

Dear Mr. Kipling:

I am aware — in fact all of us in Medicine Hat are aware — of the interest you took in our little city in your two trips across the continent.

Of course you have very many things to think about, but I am going to be importunate about a certain matter which is vexing our souls here, for not only have you been kind enough to show your interest locally, but we look to you as the Father Confessor of the Empire, and ask you to help us poor stragglers with advice, who are living on the distant frontier.

You know, no doubt, that the name of our city is a translation of the old Cree name of the place. It is rich in Indian traditions, eloquent with war songs of the Blackfeet and the Cree, with which I will not bore you.

Besides this, to us "Old Timers" the name has grown warm in our hearts. Here we have courted our sweethearts, married and begot children and have built our homes, driving our tent pegs deep into Mother Earth, and are going to remain here to hold up the old British traditions, as long as the good God gives us breath.

Well, unfortunately, some newcomers, sons of Belial (who knew not Joseph) have arisen and want to change the name of the city!! It smacks too much of the Injin, smells fearfully of the tee-pee fire and kini-ki-nick — reminds outsiders of the whacking lies (may God forgive them) of the U.S.A. newspaper men in regard to our weather and so forth. In a moment of weakness our city fathers have decided to submit the question to the vote of the rate-payers, instead of ordering the proposers to be cast into a den of fiery rattlesnakes.

Can you help us with a few words of encouragement in combatting these heretics? Your influence here is great. If it is shown that you are against this proposition, it will help us materially.

Apologizing for this long letter,

Your faithfully,

(Signed) F. F. Fatt.

Bateman's Burwash, Sussex,
December 9th, 1910.

Francis F. Fatt, Esq.
Medicine Hat

Dear Sir:

I have received your letter of the 22nd of November, which interests me intensely, both as a citizen of the Empire and as a lover of Medicine Hat.

You tell me that a public vote is to be taken on the question of changing the city's name. So far as I can make out from what I heard when I was with you in 1907 and from the clippings you enclose, the chief arguments for the change are (a) that some U.S. journalists have some sort of joke that Medicine Hat supplies all the bad weather of the U.S., and (b) that another name would look better at the head of a prospectus.

Incidentally I note that both arguments are developed at length by The Calgary Herald. I always knew that Calgary called Medicine Hat names, but I did not realize that Medicine Hat wanted to be Calgary's little god-child.

Now as to the charge of brewing bad weather, etc., I see no reason on earth why white men should be fluffed out of their city's birthright by an imported joke. Accept the charge joyously and proudly and go forward as Medicine Hat — the only city officially recognized as capable of freezing out the United States and giving the continent cold feet.

Let us examine the soul of the present name — Medicine Hat. I have no maps by me, but I seem to remember a few names of places across the border such as Schenectady, Podunk, Schoharie, Poughkeepsie, Potomac, Sohoes, Tonawanda, Onenoto, etc., etc., all of which are rather curious to the outsider, but time and the lives of men (it is people and not prospectuses that make cities) have sanctified the queer syllables with memories and associations for millions of our fellow creatures. Once upon a time these places were young and new and in the process of making themselves. That is to say they were ancestors with a duty to posterity, which duty they fulfilled in handing on their names intact; and Medicine Hat today is an ancestor — not a derivative, nor a collateral, but the founder of a line.

To my mind the name of Medicine Hat has an advantage over all the names I have quoted. It echoes as you so justly put

it the old Cree and Blackfoot tradition of red mystery and romance that once filled the prairies. Also it hints, I venture to think, at the magic that underlies the city in the shape of your natural gas. Believe me, the very name is an asset, and as years go on will become more and more of an asset. It has no duplicate in the world; it makes men ask questions, and as I know, more than twenty years ago, draws the feet of the young men towards it; it has the qualities of uniqueness, individuality, assertion and power. Above all, it is the lawful, original, sweat-and-dust-won name of the city, and to change it would be to risk the luck of the city, to disgust and dishearten old-timers, not in the city alone, but the world over, and to advertise abroad the city's lack of faith in itself. Men do not think much of a family which has risen in the world, changing its name for social reasons. They think still less of a man who because he is successful repudiates the wife who stood by him in his early struggles. I do not know what I should say, but I have the clearest notion of what I should think of a town that went back on itself.

Forgive me if I write strongly, but this a matter on which I feel keenly. As you know, I have not a dollar or a foot of land in Medicine Hat, but I have a large stake of interest and very true affection in and for the city and its folk. It is for this reason that in writing to you I have taken a liberty which to men who have known the city for several months or perhaps three years, must seem inexcusable.

In conclusion, it strikes me that the two arguments put forward for the change of name are almost equally bad. The second is perhaps a shade worse than the first. In the first case the town would change its name for fear of being laughed at. In the second it sells its name in the hope of making more money under an alias or, as The Calgary Herald writes, for the sake of the name that "has a sound like the name of a man's best girl and looks like business at the head of a financial report."

But a man's city is a trifle more than a man's best girl. She is the living background of his life and love and toil and hope and sorrow and joy. Her success is his success; her shame is his shame; her honour is his honour; and her good name is his good name.

What, then, should a city be rechristened that has sold its name? Judasville.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling stayed at the Oak Bay Hotel, Victoria, B.C., and had a time with "John Virtue," 1907.

The Result

Gilded mirror, and a polished bar,
Myriads of glasses strewn ajar,
A kind-faced man all dressed in white —
That's my recollection of last night.

The streets were narrow and far too long,
Sidewalks slippery, policemen strong,
The slamming door, the sea-going hack —
That's my recollection of getting back.

A rickety staircase, and hard to climb,
But I rested often — I'd lots of time —
An awkward keyhole and a misplaced chair
Informed by wife that I was there.

A heated interior and a revolving bed,
A sea-sick man with an awful head,
Cocktails, scotch and booze galore,
Were all introduced to the cuspidor.

And in the morning came that jug of ice,
Which is necessary to men of vice,
And when it stilled my aching brain
Did I swear off? —
I got drunk again!!